

ENGLISH NEWSLETTER FOR TEACHERS

The English Newsletter for Teachers is published by the Information Resource Center of the Public Affairs Office of the United States Embassy, Santiago, Chile. Our goal is to provide up-to-date resources and materials for English Language Teaching in Chile.

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Invitation

***If you are a dreamer, come in,
If you are a dreamer, a wisher, a liar,
A hope-er, a pray-er, a magic bean buyer...
If you're a pretender, come sit by my fire,
For we have some flax-golden tales to spin.
Come in!
Come in!***

Shel Silverstein

Using Children's Literature to Support English Language Learning By Maggie Guntren

Yes, indeed, come in! Who ***doesn't*** love a good story? All languages nurture some type of storytelling culture, whether it be oral, written, dramatized, or sung. We tell and listen to stories over coffee and dessert. We listen and reflect on traditional stories from our varied religious perspectives.

We oftentimes reread the same book over and over again because we have created rich connections between ourselves and the text. Reading, after all, is a satisfying and thought-provoking experience.

On the other hand, if you are learning a new language, who actually ***does*** love a good written story? Books a

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A Professional Opinion - Language Teaching is Vibrant in Chile!

By Ulla Connor

As a guest of The United States Embassy in Chile, I had the opportunity to observe and discuss English as a foreign language teaching in Chile for one week. During my stay, I visited six different universities and language institutes – Santiago Binational Center, UMCE, Universidad Alberto Hurtado, Universidad de Chile, Universidad de Concepcion, and Universidad Catolica de la Santisima Concepcion. In addition, I had opportunities to interact with English language teaching officials from the Ministry of Education.

The teachers and administrators I met were all extremely knowledgeable about EFL teaching and enthusiastic about many reforms taking place in language education in Chile at all levels.

I gave altogether seven lectures or workshops, including three at the Second National Conference of TESOL Chile at Universidad de Concepcion. The lectures focused on cultural differences in EFL acquisition, especially related to the teaching of writing.

My final lecture was on intercultural communication and the teaching of English in business and industry in Chile. Even though Chile TESOL is mainly concerned about the teaching at the K-12 and tertiary levels, there was a great deal of interest in the potential of future English for specific purposes instruction for teachers in Chile.

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From the Editor...

A Few Things We'd Like You to Know About Our Newsletter

To introduce this first edition of the English Newsletter for Teachers, I'd like to say a few things about how the idea for the newsletter came about. I discovered when I first started teaching ESL that it takes a lot of time and effort to find fun new activities and innovative methods to keep students interested and make learning the language easier and more enjoyable. These creative approaches usually involve looking beyond the class textbook to find new materials and realia, which requires even more preparation time.

ESL professionals who focus on the latest analyses, research, and trends in academia write most ESL publications. I tend to be more interested in reading suggestions for teaching the difference between "there" and "their" or "who" and "whom", and finding warm-up activities that will get my students speaking and keep them

producing because they're enjoying the experience. When I find a solution to a particular dilemma I'm

having, or an activity that works, I like to share it with my fellow teachers. In addition, in the Information Resource Center we are always finding new websites, list-servs and links to organizations that would be great educational tools for teachers. Why not share them, too? The U. S. Embassy brings many well-known authorities in ESL (and other fields) who share their knowledge and expertise with universities and institutions throughout Chile. Internationally renowned ESL authority Dr. Ulla Connor and our own U. S. State Department Senior English Language Fellow Maggie Guntren have generously agreed to write an article for this issue, and we are eager to help them reach a wider audience, and grateful for their contribution.

We hope that this newsletter can serve as a bulletin board for teachers (and students) in Chile to ask questions and discuss issues regarding English language teaching, and as a link with the 19 other countries with Spanish-speaking English language learners throughout the Americas. Having taught in several Spanish-speaking countries, I know there are particular issues that Spanish L1 students have learning English, and I'm sure that someone out there has found a way to deal with it. We sincerely hope that this newsletter will be the catalyst for other English Language Newsletters from the Americas, and from other regions around the globe, as well.

Jonathan Blodgett, Editor
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Language Teaching is Vibrant in Chile!

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The subtitle of this year's conference was "Non-native teachers reaching greater heights." The issue of non-native speakers as teachers is a timely one, and this movement can be a powerful help for non-native teachers' image if addressed properly. Due to globalization and the internationalization of English, native speaker standards are becoming less important (and harder to define) as English is spoken around the world increasingly by non-native speakers of English. *(A debate about the pros and cons of the movement might be a useful session for a future Chile TESOL conference.)* As distance education opportunities improve, the linking of teachers inside and outside Chile will flourish /become easier. Since the country is so

modernized/advanced and interested in technology, teacher education via distance and online services from institutions in Chile and overseas will gain in importance.

Santiago turned out to be an amazing city, so sophisticated and busy, with so much history and yet undergoing so many changes all at once. I also had the good fortune to visit Concepcion's beautiful sea shore and tour the

beautiful campuses of the many universities, especially U of Concepcion with its Berkeley-inspired layout. The incredible fresco and the beautiful collection of classic Chilean oil paintings in the art museum on campus were amazing. In fact, I found the art in Chile fabulous, and the volume of

exquisite oil paintings throughout public buildings in Chile quite impressive. I gaze at the calendar with pictures from the museums that the organizers gave me (a thoughtful souvenir) and plot my art and jewelry shopping expedition on my next trip to Chile :-)

Language teaching is vibrant in Chile. I found Chileans to be earnest and committed, full of hope, energy, and enthusiasm to tackle the challenges ahead. The universities I visited have published scholars who have a great deal to contribute to the growing literature on academic and professional English. In my own areas of expertise – contrastive rhetoric, intercultural communication, and genre analysis – I see great potential for growth and collaboration. The growing number of theses focusing on contrastive text analysis and corpus linguistics in Chile are clear indications of such research strength among Chilean linguists.

One thing I can say for sure - I am coming back. Five days is too short! I want to visit more places in Chile, eat that delicious sea food, drink their world-class wines, and enjoy the warm Chilean hospitality.

Two of Dr. Connor's power point presentation slides – one on intercultural rhetoric, the other on international business communication (plenaries at the conference) – have been posted on the Chile TESOL website:

<http://www.tesolchile.net/>

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From Lessons to Life: Authentic Materials Bridge the Gap

By Maria Spelleri

"Text books and the sheltered language they provide have their place in the classroom, but there is a gap between communicative competence as measured in text book tasks and as needed by the adult who has to fulfill his roles as employee, parent, and community member."

Using authentic materials as teaching tools in the ESL class is one way to make effective and efficient use of adult learners' time by directly addressing their critical needs. Authentic materials offer real language that is contextually rich and culturally pertinent. They also provide insights into the adult learners' new community and the services and opportunities it offers.

Real Life Means High Interest

ESL learners like authentic materials. As adults, they recognize the significance of these items and how key they are to real life problems and tasks. At some levels of learning, it is impossible to separate linguistic needs from the learner's survival needs, so it makes sense to try to approach both simultaneously through authentic materials. These materials have a high interest value because of their relevance and because there are at least three layers of learning embedded within them: language learning (the structure and vocabulary), cultural insights (think about what a city government complaint form says about a culture), and practical application (using the item in the way it was intended-to benefit oneself and one's family; e.g., planning a birthday party in a public park once the amenities, rules and hours of the park have been discovered.) Focusing on items of immediate relevance and high interest may make a difference when work, family and other obligations compete with English class for the learner's time. If the adult learner is finding immediate benefit from his study, in other words, improvements in his life outside the classroom are on-going and not put off to the future, it may help reduce program drop-out rates and ease that tiresome (for both teachers and students) cycle of drop-out/re-registration.

Exposure to authentic language means that prediction skills will be honed and that learners will improve their strategies for dealing with uncertainty. These skills and strategies can be spotlighted and built upon by the teacher to achieve much faster results than would naturally occur if the learner were just coming across the authentic material and unconsciously developing strategies on his own.

These excerpts are courtesy of ESL Magazine:

<http://www.eslmag.com> To read the complete article, go to: <http://www.eslmag.com/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=18>.

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Useful Websites for English Language Teaching and Learning

American Educational Research Association (AERA)
<http://www.aera.net/>

AERA is a prominent international professional organization with the primary goal of advancing educational research and its practical application in the classroom.

The Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL)

<http://www.cal.org/>

A private, nonprofit organization involved in applying research and information about language and culture to educational, cultural, and social concerns.

English Teaching Forum Online

<http://exchanges.state.gov/education/engteaching/eal-foru.htm>

A quarterly journal published by the U.S. Department of State for teachers of English as a foreign or second language.

ESL Home Page From University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign

<http://www.rong-chang.com/>

This home page is a starting point for ESL learners who want to learn English through the World Wide Web. Many people have created ESL learning materials for the Web. This home page links you to those ESL sites and other interesting places. The variety of materials will allow you to choose something appropriate for yourself.

ESL on the Web

<http://deil.lang.uiuc.edu/web.pages/esl.html>

From the DEIL/IEI Lingua Center at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign has links to resources and exercises for grammar, reading, listening, speaking/

Please visit our English Teaching Site at the U.S. Embassy Santiago for additional information and links to excellent resources for English Language Learning:

<http://www.englishteaching.cl/>

And Chile TESOL at:

<http://www.tesolchile.net/>

We would like to invite everyone to contribute articles, suggestions, recommendations, advice, links, or even poetry. Our goal is to establish a network where English language teachers and students help each other. Please direct all contributions or questions to ircchile@state.gov with "English Newsletter" as the subject of your email.

Using Children's Literature to Support English

Language Learning

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full of unknown words and complicated grammar structures. If you are an English Language Learner, even the simplest English books often seem daunting. Isn't it easier to just toil through the tedious textbook and workbook where the right answers can be found?

Children's literature provides authentic materials for students of all ages and backgrounds. Many English language-learning resources are languid and dreary, while stories are appealing and motivating. From a pedagogical perspective, reading children's literature aloud offers an excellent language role model, increases listening skills, develops more difficult vocabulary in a meaningful context, provides prompts for higher level thinking, and supports pronunciation practice. Reading aloud and using children's stories supports the creation of background knowledge and allows students to connect to what they already know through pictures and discussion.

Many children's stories carry an adult message and deal with core issues that are sometimes difficult to discuss because of wide-ranging language levels, but which are the topics we really want to communicate about as human beings.

Multicultural children's stories provide a neutral and natural forum in which to begin rich conversations about race, class, gender, stereotypes, history, and family. Adding children's literature to your teaching toolbox is simple and does not require an enormous amount of time on the part of the teacher. Asking simple pre, during, and post reading questions, being metacognitive during the reading, asking yourself the questions out loud that you

naturally ask as a native speaker, as well as having a whiteboard or chalkboard ready are oftentimes the only teaching gear necessary. Going over vocabulary **prior** to the reading also stimulates comprehension and word

recognition. Teachers can skim the book, create a list of key vocabulary, write the list on the whiteboard and define the words before starting the story. As you come across these words in the text, they are familiar and you can point to or otherwise illustrate the meaning of the vocabulary without relying on a student's first language.

Through children's literature, we increase vocabulary, we are exposed to a variety of cultural values, and we learn to look at ideas from a variety of perspectives. Using children's stories to support English

language acquisition combines an easily obtainable authentic text with the ever-necessary pleasure factor that makes learning a life-long pastime.

Maggie Guntren, U.S. State Department Senior English Language Fellow in Chile, brings a broad and impressive list of educational accomplishments to her ESL work: Grant Reviewer for the U.S. Department of Education, award winning short story writer, former Fulbright Grant Recipient and Academic Dean of the Center for Talented Youth at Johns Hopkins University. This is a partial list of the projects Maggie is working on in Chile : working with the Ministry of Education doing teacher training for public school teachers in numerous locations throughout Chile, BNC teacher training, participation in TESOL, Conferences at several universities, and teacher training at Municipalidad de San Miguel.

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Pre-Reading Questions

Based on the title, what do you think the story is going to be about?

What does the cover tell you about the story?

Make a prediction about the story by looking at the book cover.

You can also do a "picture walk" through the text and let the students look at the pictures before you even read the story to build mental imagery in their minds about the content and ideas of the story.

During Reading Questions

I wonder what is going to happen next? What do you think?

What vocabulary words have you seen so far?

Have our predictions been correct?

References and Website Resources:

This article references material from the excellent website:
<http://www.trelease-on-reading.com/>

Which I highly recommend!

Post-Reading Questions

What surprised you about the story? Did it end the way you thought it would?

What vocabulary words do you remember?

Can you think of another way to end the story?

Does this story remind you of another story you have heard or read?

Does it remind you of anything that has happened to you, or to someone you know?